

So semeth it; for nadde they but a sheete
Which that they myghte wrappe hem inne at nyght,
And a bak to walken inne by daylyght,
They wolde hem selle and spenden on the craft;
They kan nat stynte til nothyng be laft.
And everemoore, where that evere they goon
Men may hem knowe by smel of brymstoon;
for al the world, they stynten as a goot;
hir savour is so rammyssh and so hoot,
That, though a man from hem a mile be,
The savour wole infecte hym, trusteth me;
Lo, thus by smelling, and threedbare array,
If that men liste, this folk they knowe may.
And if a man wole aske hem pryvely,
Why they been clothed so unthriftily,
They right anon wol rownen in his ere
And seyn, that if that they espied were,
Men wolde hem slee, bycause of hir science;
Lo, thus this folk bitrayen innocence!

DASSE over this; I go my tale unto.
Er that the pot be on the fire ydo.
Of metals with a certeyn quantite,
My lord hem tempreth, and no man but he,
Now he is goon, I dare seyn boldely,
for, as men seyn, he kan doon craftily;
Algate I woot wel he hath swich a name,
And yet ful ofte he renneth in a blame;
And wite ye how? ful ofte it happeth so,
The pot to breketh, and farewell! al is go!
Thise metals been of so greet violence,
Oure walles mowe nat make hem resistance,
But if they weren wrought of lym and stoon;
They persen so, and thurgh the wal they goon,
And somme of hem synken into the ground,
Thus han we lost by tymes many a pound,
And somme are scattered al the floor aboute,
Somme lepe into the roof; withouten doute,
Though that the feend noght inoure sighte hym
shewe,

I trowe he with us be, that ilke shrewe!
In helle where that he lord is and sire,
Nis ther moore wo, ne moore rancour ne ire.
Whan that oure pot is broke, as I have sayd,
Every man chit, and halt hym yvele apayd.
Somme seyde, it was long on the fir making,
Somme seyde, nay! it was on the blowyng;
Channe was I fered, for that was myn office;
Straw! quod the thridde, ye been lewed & nyce,
It was nat tempred as it oghte be.
Nay! quod the fourthe, stynt, and herkne me;
Bycause our fir ne was nat maad of beech,
That is the cause, and oother noon, so theech!
I kan nat telle wheron it was along,
But wel I woot greet strif is us among.
What! quod my lord, ther is namoore to doone,
Of thise perils I wol be war eftsoone;
I am right sikler that the pot was crased.
Be as be may, be ye nothyng amased;
As usage is, lat swepe the floor as swithe,
Plukke up your hertes, and beeth glad and blithe!
The mullok on an heep ysweped was,
And on the floor ycast a canevas,
And al this mullok in a syve ythrowe,

And sifted, and ypiked many a throwe.
Pardee! quod oon, somewhat of oure metal
Yet is ther heere, though that we han nat al.
Although this thyng myshapped have as now,
Another tyme it may be wel ynow.
As moste putte oure good in aventure;
A marchant, pardee! may nat ay endure,
Trusteth me wel, in his prosperitee;
Somtyme his good is drenched in the see,
And somtyme comth it sauf unto the londe.
Pees! quod my lord, the nexte tyme I shal
fonde

To bryngen oure craft al in another plite;
And but I do, sires, lat me han the wite;
Ther was defaute in somewhat, wel I woot.
ANOTHER seyde the fir was over hoot;
But, be it hoot or coold, I dar seye this,
That we concluden everemoore amys.
We faille of that which that we wolden have,
And in oure madnesse everemoore we rave.
And whan we been togidres everichoon,
Every man semeth a Salomon.
But every thyng which shyneth as the gold,
Nis nat gold, as that I have herd it told;
Ne every appul that is fair to eye
Ne is nat good, what so men clappe or crye.
Right so, lo! fareth it amonges us;
He that semeth the wiseste, by Jhesus!
Is moost fool, whan it cometh to the preef;
And he that semeth trewest is a theef;
That shul ye knowe, er that I fro yow wende,
By that I of my tale have maad an ende.

Explicit prima pars. Et sequitur pars secunda.

CHANON is a chanoun of
religioun
Amonges us, wolde infecte
al a toun,
Thogh it as greet were as
was Nynyvee,
Rome, Alisaundre, Troye,
and othere three.
His sleightes and his infinit
falsnesse

Ther koude no man writen, as I gesse,
Though that he myghte lyven a thousand yere.
In al this world of falsheide nis his peer;
for in his termes so he wolde hym wynde,
And speke his wordes in so sly a kynde,
Whanne he commune shal with any wight,
That he wol make hym doten anon right,
But it a feend be, as hymselfen is,
ful many a man hath he begiled er this,
And wole, if that he tyve may a while;
And yet men ride and goon ful many a mile
hym for to seke and have his aqueyntaunce,
Noght knowyng of his false governaunce;
And if yow list to yewe me audience,
I wol it tellen heere in youre presence.

AT, worshipful chanouns religious,
Ne demeth nat that I sclaudre youre hous.
Although that my tale of a chanoun be;
Of every ordre som shrewe is, pardee,
And God forbede that al a compaignye

sholde rewe oo singuler mannes folye.
To sclaudre yow is nothyng myn entente,
But to correcten that is mys I mente.
This tale was nat oonly toold for yow,
But eek for othere mo; ye woot wel how
That, among Cristes apostelles twelve,
Ther nas no traytour but Judas hymselfe.
Channe why sholde al the remenant have blame
That gilleles were? By yow I seye the same.
Save oonly this, if ye wol herke me,
If any Judas in youre convent be,
Remoeveth hym bitymes, I yow rede,
If shame or los may causen any drede.
And beeth nothyng displeased, I yow preye,
But in this cas herkeneth what I shal seye.

IN London was a preest, an annueleer,
That therinne dwelled hadde
many a yere,
Which was so plesaunt and so
servysable

Unto the wyf, wheras he was at table,
That she wolde suffre hym nothyng for to paye
for bord ne clothyng, wente he never so gaye;
And spendyng silver hadde he right ynow.
Therof no fors; I wol procede as now,
And telle forth my tale of the chanoun,
That broghte this preest to confusoun.

THIS false chanoun cam upon a day
Unto this preestes chambre, wher he lay,
Bisechyng hym to lene hym a certeyn
Of gold, and he wolde quite it hym ageyn.
Leene me a marc, quod he, but dayes three,
And at my day I wol it quiten thee.
And if so be that thow me fynde fals,
Another day do hange me by the hals!

THIS preest hym took a marc, and that as swithe,
And this chanoun hym thanked ofte sithe,
And took his leve, and wente forthe his weye,
And at the thridde day broghte his moneye,
And to the preest he took his gold agayn,
Wherof this preest was wonder glad and fayn.

Certes, quod he, nothyng anoyeth me
To lene a man a noble, or two or thre,
Or what thyng were in my possessioun,
Whan he so trewe is of condicioun,
That in no wise he breke wole his day;
To swich a man I kan never seye nay.

WHAT! quod this chanoun, sholde I be
untrewe?

Nay, that were thyng yfallen al of newe.
Trouthe is a thyng that I wol evere kepe,
Unto that day in which that I shal crepe
Into my grave, or ellis God forbede!
Bileveth this as sikler as the Crede.
God thanke I, and in good tyme be it sayd,
That ther was never man yet yvele apayd
for gold ne silver that he to me lente,
Ne never falsheide in myn herte I mente.
And, sire, quod he, now of my pryvete,
Syn ye so goodlich han been unto me,
And hithed to me so greet gentillesse,
Somewhat to quyte with youre kyndenesse,
I wol yow shewe, if that yow list to leere,

I wol yow teche pleyntly the manere,
How I kan werken in philosophie.
Taketh good heede ye shul wel seen at eye,
That I wol doon a maistrie er I go.
Ye, quod the preest, ye, sire, and wol ye so?
Marie! therof I pray yow hertely!
At youre comandement, sire, trewely,
Quod the chanoun, and ellis God forbede!
Lo, how this theef koude his servyse beede!
ful sooth it is, that swiche profred servyse
Stynketh, as witnessen thise olde wyse;
And that ful soone I wol it verifie

In this chanoun, roote of alle trecherie,
That everemoore delit bath and gladnesse,
Swiche feendly thoughtes in his herte presse,
How Cristes peple he may to meschief brynge;
God kepe us from his false dissymulunge!

NOUGHT wiste this preest with whom that he
delte,

Ne of his harm comyng he nothyng felte.
O sely preest! O sely innocent!
With covetise anon thou shalt be blent!
O graceles, ful blynd is thy conceite,
Nothyng ne artow war of the deceite
Which that this fox yshapen hath for thee;
His wily wrenches thou ne mayst nat flee.
Wherfore, to go to the conclusioun
That refereth to thy confusoun,
Unhappy man! anon I wol me hie
To tellen thyn unwit and thy folye,
And eek the falsnesse of that oother wrecche,
As ferforth as that my konnyng may strecche.

THIS chanoun was my lord, ye wolden weene;
Sire Hoost, in feith, and by the hevenes queene,
It was another chanoun, and nat hee,
That kan an hundred foold moore subtiltee!
He hath bitrayed folkes many tyme;
Of his falsheide it dulleth me to ryme.
Evere whan that I speke of his falsheide,
for shame of hym my chekes wexen rede,
Al gates, they bigynnen for to glowe,
for reednesse have I noon, right wel I knowe,
In my visage; for fumes diverse
Of metals, which ye han herd me reherce,
Consumed and wasted han my reednesse.

Now tak heede of this chanouns cursednesse!

Sire, quod he to the preest, lat youre man gon
for quyksilver, that we hadde it anon,
And lat hym bryngen ounces two or three;
And whan he comth, as faste shul ye see

A wonder thyng, which ye saugh nevere er this.
Sire, quod the preest, it shal be doon ywis.
He bad his servant fecchen hym this thyng,
And he al redy was at his bidding,
And wente hym forth, and cam anon agayn
With this quyksilver, soothly for to sayn,
And toke thise ounces thre to the chanoun;
And he hem leyde faire and wel adoun,
And bad the servant coles for to brynge,
That he anon myghte go to his werkynge.

THIS coles right anon weren yfet,
And this chanoun took out a crosselet
Of his bosom, and shewed it to the preest.